# Prince Edward Island

# Budget Address
## 2014

Presented by
The Honourable Wesley J. Sheridan
Minister of Finance, Energy and Municipal Affairs
and Chair of Treasury Board

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

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**The Honourable Wesley J. Sheridan**
**Minister of Finance, Energy and Municipal Affairs**
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At the Fourth Session of the Sixty-fourth General Assembly
of Prince Edward Island

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The full texts of the Budget Address, Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure and supporting schedules for 2014-2015 and previous years are available on the Province of Prince Edward Island's website:

http://www.gov.pe.ca/budget

# PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND
# 2014 BUDGET

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## THE BUDGET ADDRESS

### Introduction

Madame Speaker, it is an honour to table the 2014-2015 Operating Budget in this, the 150th year since the Charlottetown Conference, which led to the creation of our great Nation.

Budget 2014 will continue to follow a plan that aims at improving the lives of Islanders, while living within our financial means. We are able to achieve this by meeting our targets, and continuing to work toward balancing the Budget, while protecting important investments made since 2007.

Nous pouvons y arriver en atteignant nos objectifs et en continuant à travailler pour équilibrer le budget, tout en protégeant les importants investissements effectués depuis 2007.

In the Fall of 2013, we reiterated our commitment to making health care more focused on patient needs; placing our students at the centre of our education system; and giving businesses easier and more-direct access to Government programs.

***"...our commitment to making health care more focused on patient needs; placing our students at the centre of our education system; and giving businesses easier and more-direct access to Government programs."***

In Budget 2014, new investments will be made in health care, aimed at ensuring Islanders continue to have improved access to services when they are needed, and where they are needed. These new measures will focus on making services more affordable and responsive for Islanders.

Madame Speaker, in 2012, we introduced the Social Action Plan to improve the lives of our most vulnerable citizens. Budget 2014 will include funding to further support the Plan.

Our Budget will also provide funding to improve supports for student achievement and professional learning for our dedicated teachers.

Further investments are also required to support our primary industries, expand trade and improve the strength of our economy by setting conditions for the private sector to flourish.

***"Further investments are also required to support our primary industries, expand trade and improve the strength of our economy by setting conditions for the private sector to flourish."***

**2014**

Madame Speaker, 2014 promises to be a great year in our Province. We will celebrate that very important meeting of the Fathers of Confederation 150 years ago, which paved the way to the creation of our Nation.

Festivities began on New Year's Eve and have gathered momentum over the past three months, with celebrations in communities across the Island, including the hosting of the O'Brien National Harness Racing Awards and the East Coast Music Awards.

We are also looking forward to the visit of their Royal Highnesses, The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall, as well as the annual meeting of Canadian Premiers where the state of the Canadian Federation will be discussed. Our Province will also play host to over twenty-five Federal, Provincial and Territorial meetings.

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We will also see the Tall Ships sail in for a visit; and celebrities such as Shania Twain, who will join us for a Founders Week Concert, one of only two of her performances in Canada this year.

In addition to this, world class entertainment will be on display at the Canada Day concerts and the Cavendish Beach Music Festival.

Over the past 18 months, communities from all corners of the Province have been able to participate in the PEI 2014 fund. Community groups are taking the opportunity to celebrate our heritage across the Island with projects of historical significance. Over 160 projects will give communities the ability to showcase local arts and culture, enhance streetscapes, and enable dialogue about our past and our future.

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Madame Speaker, the opening of the expanded Prince Edward Island Convention Centre last year, has enabled many organizations to draw new and larger conventions to our Province, in time to celebrate 2014. With Meetings PEI projecting 24,000 delegates in 2014 compared to 12,000 last year, we are already seeing the economic benefits of this facility.

**Economy**

The Prince Edward Island economy is continuing to recover from the effects of the economic downturn. We are starting to see some positive indicators both here at home and in other jurisdictions:

- Employment averaged 74,100 people in 2013, an increase of 1.8 percent from 2012, a new all-time high;

- Manufacturing shipments from PEI increased 9.8 percent in 2013, while international exports have increased 6.3 percent;

- Total Capital spending totalled over $1 billion in 2013, an increase of 7.1 percent, due to increases in both construction activity and machinery acquisitions; and

- The total value of retail sales increased 1.3 percent in 2013.

Madame Speaker, PEI continues to advance toward the economic goals of reaching an employment level of 75,000 and raising the value of the economy to $6 billion by 2016. The Conference Board of Canada estimates that these goals will be achieved. Key to this performance is the Government's record on job creation and Islanders consistently having one of the highest labour force participation rates among the provinces, third only to the resource-rich economies of Alberta and Saskatchewan.

***"...PEI continues to advance toward the economic goals of reaching an employment level of 75,000 and raising the value of the economy to $6 billion by 2016."***

The Island economy expanded by an estimated 1.5 percent in 2013, and is expected to expand at a similar pace in 2014. Growth will be supported by continued strength in the manufacturing and export sectors, which will benefit from the lower value of the Canadian dollar and increased demand from both the United States and abroad. The tourism industry will also support growth in 2014, as a result of the expanded tourism offering due to the 150th anniversary of the Charlottetown Conference celebrations.

***"Growth will be supported by continued strength in the manufacturing and export sectors, which will benefit from the lower value of the Canadian dollar and increased demand from both the United States and abroad."***

**Fiscal Responsibility**

Madame Speaker, beginning in 2012, we instituted a three-year planning process. I am pleased that we remain on track to meet our targets. We have improved on the Budget target of a $58.9 million deficit for 2013-2014 with a forecast deficit of $51.9 million. Our Plan will further reduce the deficit to $39.7 million next year.

The path to a balanced Budget requires a firm commitment to responsible management of our financial resources. In the next year, we are projecting revenues to increase by 3.3 percent over last year's Budget, while total expenditures will increase by 2.0 percent. Departments continue to hold expenditures at current levels, while Health PEI is projecting moderate growth to meet the evolving needs of our patients.

Madame Speaker, we could get to a balanced Budget more quickly, but not without compromising the programs and services, especially in health care and education, that are necessary to the well-being of Islanders. During Pre-Budget Consultations, Islanders made it clear that reducing services should not be an option to balance the Budget.

Madame Speaker, it was very apparent that the long-term sustainability of the public sector pension plans was becoming a concern. To address this, a priority of Government over the past year, was to put the pension plans on a sound financial platform.

After discussions with both current employees and retirees, a number of reforms will be phased in, to ensure pensions are secure for the future, and at the same time, remain affordable for both employees and taxpayers. We will also continue to participate in the push to strengthen the Canada Pension Plan to ensure more Canadians have sufficient income when they retire.

***"...to ensure pensions are secure for the future, and at the same time, remain affordable for both employees and taxpayers."***

**Improvements to Health Care For Islanders**

Madame Speaker, Our Government remains committed to improving the delivery of health care services to Islanders. As we continue to provide Islanders with better access to services, we will also remove some of the financial barriers to certain services because we understand that Islanders shouldn't be put in a position where they need to choose between necessities like groceries, and medical costs.

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Investments in Mental Health and Addictions are also needed to ensure Islanders have better access to the health care resources they require. During the past year, our Government appointed a new Provincial Chief Mental Health and Addictions Officer. Her first task will be to develop a long-term strategy to transform the way mental health services are delivered in the Province.

To further support this initiative, we have allocated an additional $1.2 million to address concerns related to drug abuse.

Parents play an important role in the mental health of our children and they need to be involved and engaged in creating and implementing solutions. That is why we are launching the Triple P Program. Triple P stands for Positive Parenting Program and was developed at the University of Queensland in Australia after years of rigorous research. It is a system that is easy to implement, by providing proven parenting solutions, to help solve current parenting problems and prevent future struggles. Four departments will be involved in the delivery of this Program.

Madame Speaker, we continue to make investments in programs and services for persons with diabetes, including funding for test strips and improved dialysis access. We also know the role that insulin pumps can play in improving quality of life, particularly for children. That is why our Government is moving forward with a program to help cover the cost of insulin pumps and related supplies for children with Type 1 diabetes. This Budget allocates approximately $400,000 for the purchase of insulin pumps and supplies, to ensure that families with children who need help, receive it.

***"That is why our Government is moving forward with a program to help cover the cost of insulin pumps and related supplies for children with Type 1 diabetes."***

Madame Speaker, good eyesight is critical to learning. Children who cannot properly see the words in their books or on their screens, or follow along with what is written on the board, may struggle to reach their potential. To ensure children get the best start in their education, a new 'Eye See, Eye Learn' program will be jointly launched by the Department of Health and Wellness and the Prince Edward Island Association of Optometrists. In the Fall of 2014, eligible kindergarten children will receive a free eye exam, and if they require glasses, they will receive them free-of-charge through a private sector sponsor.

Madame Speaker, a reality is that, as a small Province, it is not possible to provide every health care service on the Island. We are fortunate to have been able to create partnerships with our other Maritime provinces to treat Island patients and ensure the level-of-care they receive off-Island is excellent. We recognize that the associated travel costs can present a financial burden to some Island families, so the Department of Health and Wellness has developed a partnership with Maritime Bus, whereby patients in need, receive support for their off-Island transportation costs. Based on income testing, patients will receive financial assistance for bus transportation to their health care destination. Further, Maritime Bus will provide discounts to family members and special prices for accommodations.

***"...Department of Health and Wellness has developed a partnership with Maritime Bus, whereby patients in need, receive support for their off-Island transportation costs."***

Depending on the injury or illness, the best place for a patient to recover can be in their own home. However, that may require special medical equipment such as a wheelchair, hospital bed, walker or bath seat. For some Islanders, not having access to this equipment means a longer stay in the hospital. To help Islanders return home from hospital earlier, Government will be partnering with the Red Cross to offer a Health Equipment Loan Program. This Program will allow Islanders to recover independently, in the comfort of their own home.

Madame Speaker, the Catastrophic Drug Program was introduced last Fall to ensure Islanders have affordable drug coverage. Islanders can now apply to have their high-cost drugs covered by the Program to ensure they have access to the medications they require. Together with the high-cost drug program, over $8 million will be provided to Islanders needing these expensive prescription medications.

The best way to prevent getting the flu is by getting a flu shot. Yet, most Islanders will choose not to receive the annual vaccine. To make it more convenient for Islanders to get the flu shot, and to enable pharmacists to enhance their scope of practice, the Department of Health and Wellness will be changing Regulations

so that pharmacists can directly deliver the flu vaccine.

Enabling pharmacists to deliver flu vaccines not only helps keep Islanders healthy, it is also a wise use of health resources.

The renovations to the QEH Day Surgery Department will be completed later this Spring and will help reduce wait times and provide better services to Islanders. This Budget will allocate new spending of $775,000 to provide operational support for the Department. The expansion will increase the number of day surgery spaces from 10 to 18, as well as provide a separate Ophthalmology Suite.

Madame Speaker, we recognize the need to improve health care services for children with complex medical needs, and have recently provided for a physiotherapist and a provincial coordinator to create efficiencies and enhance support for families of this patient population. We will soon be ready to announce additional new initiatives to support Island children with complex medical needs.

The new stand-alone Palliative Care Centre will open in the Fall. This facility will improve the quality-of-life for patients in a comfortable environment. The Centre will include a day program, respite services, an outpatient clinic and expansion of the number of beds provided from eight to ten.

***"The new stand-alone Palliative Care Centre will open in the Fall. This facility will improve the quality-of-life for patients in a comfortable environment."***

Madame Speaker, Our Government is committed to providing seniors with the most-appropriate care, in the most-appropriate setting. In the past year, we added 17 new long-term care beds in Prince County and are in the process of adding a further 45 beds in Queens County. These new beds were in addition to 6 long-term beds added to Stewart Memorial until a new 24-bed facility is constructed in Tyne Valley. We are pleased to say that planning for the construction of this new facility will begin later this Spring.

**Education and Early Childhood Development**

Madame Speaker, the Province is committed to helping Island students thrive, achieve and succeed. Since 2007, investments in Education and Early Childhood Development have increased by 36 percent to $231 million, while maintaining a student-to-educator ratio among the lowest in Canada.

***"Since 2007, investments in Education and Early Childhood Development have increased by 36 percent to $231 million, while maintaining a student-to-educator ratio among the lowest in Canada."***

Madame Speaker, starting with students in Grade 9, we will be introducing initiatives to help with career development, as they prepare to transition to post-secondary education, or enter the workforce. The Student Graduation and Transition Planner curriculum resource will enable high school graduates to leave the public school system with:

- a personal life and career plan;
- the graduation requirements to access post-secondary programs that meet career goals;
- a personal financial plan to support these goals; and
- identified support networks and resources for the future.

This work is being done in partnership with the Department of Innovation and Advanced Learning, post-secondary institutions and the School Boards.

In the next year, we will continue to invest in improvements to the Education system by implementing a series of initiatives to support student achievement. These initiatives will provide additional resources to ensure the School Boards' highly-qualified teachers receive the support they need to improve learning for our children.

***"In the next year, we will continue to invest in improvements to the Education system by implementing a series of initiatives to support student achievement."***

While working toward student achievement, we also recognize the ever-evolving role of our dedicated teachers.

***"While working toward student achievement, we also recognize the ever-evolving role of our dedicated teachers."***

- To enhance professional learning, three new job-embedded professional learning days for teachers have been added, while maintaining the number of instructional days in the new calendar;

- We have invested in an instructional development website for educators to house curriculum videos and provide a repository for resources and research-based educational briefs; and

- When implementing new curriculum in Language Arts and Mathematics, a model will be utilized which supplements traditional face-to-face learning, with curriculum videos.

As a result of the Preschool Excellence Initiative, Government developed a system of Early Years Centres to ensure consistent, high-quality education and services are provided for our youngest Islanders. In the next year, support of approximately $8 million will be provided to the Early Years Centres. Further, to maintain access and choice in the area of early learning and child care and education, Government will continue to provide funding for private child care programs during the coming fiscal year.

**Social Action Plan**

Madame Speaker, the Province's first Social Action Plan was released in May 2012. We remain committed to ensuring that all Islanders get the support they need to succeed in today's society. To this end, we are taking the following actions to continue to implement the Social Action Plan.

We are continuing to make improvements to the Social Assistance Program in the areas of shelter and food benefits. Shelter rates were increased by three percent in November 2013 and Social Assistance food rates for singles were increased by five percent in January 2014.

A five-year plan to increase food rates for all clients will be implemented beginning in the next year.

Twenty new rent supplements for families and persons with disabilities were created in the last year and another twenty will be implemented in the next year. In addition, more funding was allocated for families who are providing care in their homes for adults with disabilities. Funding will also be increased for community organizations to provide additional residential placements.

Madame Speaker, we recognize that children reach their full potential in life when they are raised in a caring, nurturing, safe, home environment where they are loved and their basic needs are met. To improve assistance for children-in-care, we increased room and board, and clothing allowances by five percent in 2013, and will provide a further increase of two percent next year.

We will also continue to provide assistance of $1.2 million to support the Home Renovation Program. In addition, we will implement a new home care renovation program and increase the grant amount to $2,000 for qualifying applicants through the Seniors Home Repair Program.

***"...we will implement a new home care renovation program and increase the grant amount to $2,000 for qualifying applicants through the Seniors Home Repair Program."***

Madame Speaker, we realize that more needs to be done to support and enhance the quality-of-life for those Islanders served by the Department of Community Services and Seniors. By moving forward on the implementation of the Social Action Plan, we are improving the environment to ensure every individual has the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

**Agriculture**

Madame Speaker, we continue to support the growth and development of agriculture, which is the number one industry on Prince Edward Island. With prices for many commodities improving, the outlook for the Agriculture sector is, in general, very positive.

***"With prices for many commodities improving, the outlook for the Agriculture sector, is in general, very positive."***

Initiatives in support of the Industry include contributions of over $10 million through the Production Insurance, Agri-Stability and Agri-Invest programs, to assist farmers in mitigating production and financial risk.

To help farmers manage and protect the natural environment, the Department continues to provide stewardship programming such as conservation planning, installation of engineered structures and nutrient management. Protecting and enhancing our natural assets is a priority for farmers and Government to reinforce the value of the PEI brand.

**Forestry**

Madame Speaker, this year we will be introducing a new Forest Investment Program to help woodlot owners get involved in forest management. This small loans program will allow landowners to finance their contributions to forest management over a reasonable period of time. Coupled with incentives available through the Forest Enhancement Program, it will enable more landowners to improve the health and diversity of their forests.

***"... this year we will be introducing a new Forest Investment Program to help woodlot owners get involved in forest management."***

**Fisheries**

Madame Speaker, the global demand for seafood is expanding and Prince Edward Island is in an excellent position to take advantage of the opportunity. Landings in the lobster sector have been increasing in recent years and two major studies have been supported. The 'Independent Review of the Prince Edward Island Lobster Industry' and the 'Maritime Lobster Panel' contain recommendations that will help the industry maximize the value obtained from the lobster resource.

We are already moving on a number of recommendations in the lobster reports with new investments in quality handling training, increasing live holding capacity, and supporting market development and product innovation.

The aquaculture industry provides more than 1,500 year-round jobs in our rural communities. Government will continue to assist the aquaculture sector to expand production and develop new markets all over the world. PEI mussels and oysters, including our historic Malpeque brand have gained international recognition. We will continue to offer programming support in aquaculture to develop new technologies, expand the sector, and support research, promotion and innovative ideas.

The quality of Prince Edward Island seafood products needs to be communicated to key markets in Canada, the United States, Europe and Asia. We will work closely with our processors, fishers and aquaculturists to promote our seafood in these markets.

***"The quality of Prince Edward Island seafood products needs to be communicated to key markets in Canada, the United States, Europe and Asia."***

**Environment**

Madame Speaker, the protection and enhancement of the environment remains a top priority of this Government.

Understanding that watershed management groups play an important role in protecting the environment, we will be establishing a model watershed project. The project will go through an intensive process to select a watershed, nominated by the community, to receive a focused effort to implement a community-driven plan. The expectation would be that the process could then be used across the Province.

As a result of the report from The Bonshaw Hills Public Lands Committee, we will be establishing the Province's first wilderness park, which will provide educational and recreational opportunities for Islanders. To further stimulate interest, we will be conducting a park naming contest, with participation from school-age children.

Madame Speaker, the turbines are now spinning at the Hermanville/Clearspring Wind Development Project. The Project was recently completed, and when added to our existing wind capacity, Prince Edward Island is now generating more than thirty percent of its electricity requirements from this clean, renewable resource. The Project provided significant benefits to the local economy during construction, and will contribute $350,000 per year toward landowner payments and a community trust fund.

***"Prince Edward Island is now generating more than thirty percent of its electricity requirements from this clean, renewable resource."***

Our Government continues to pursue opportunities to utilize biomass heat to reduce the environmental impact of heating public buildings. In the past year, thirteen schools, manors, hospitals and correctional facilities were converted to biomass heat, and we continue to explore further opportunities.

This year will also see the completion of the Confederation Trail on Prince Edward Island, made possible with a very generous donation of $1 million from the W. Garfield Weston Foundation, and an additional $400,000 from the Trans Canada Trail, ensuring this important resource is available to provide recreational opportunities for generations to come.

**Development**

Madame Speaker, over the past year, we have been extremely successful in supporting business expansion, especially in rural Prince Edward Island.

- MacDougall Steel recently announced a $4.5 Million expansion in Borden, creating 40 new jobs exporting structural steel;

- Aspin Kemp will create up to 25 new jobs with the relocation of their head office to the Montague waterfront, in addition to their continuing expansion at Pooles Corner;

- Jasper Wyman and Son will create an additional 25 full-time and 70 seasonal jobs in Morell, by significantly increasing blueberry processing capacity in PEI;

- IOS Solutions in Bloomfield has grown to employ over 150 people; and

- TUC Managed IT Solutions in Summerside plans to add up to 32 IT professionals.

We will continue to build on our successes, by offering creative and flexible solutions to develop business, through grants, loans, location assistance, and labour and training supports.

Finance PEI has enhanced assistance to expand small business by increasing the maximum loan available under the Entrepreneur Loan Program, from $50,000 to $100,000.

Madame Speaker, we continue to support IT companies through labour rebates and other measures. To build on the successes of local PEI-based information technology companies, we will encourage additional business start-up and incubation in the information technology sector, through a dedicated program that provides office space, mentoring, and business counselling support.

The aerospace industry has grown to employ over 900 people, with annual exports of $380 million. We continue to support PEI-based aerospace companies by participating in dedicated trade missions to develop new markets both internationally and more recently in Western Canada. We also research and implement specific trade and sales initiatives to maximize results for PEI-based companies.

***"The aerospace industry has grown to employ over 900 people, with annual exports of $380 million."***

As with any growing industry, access to labour can be a challenge. Therefore, we have initiated a partnership with aerospace companies, Holland College, and Skills PEI, to deliver aerospace courses, ensuring skilled workers are available for this important industry.

Across Canada, universities and colleges are faced with declining domestic student enrollment in post-secondary education. Therefore, institutions are increasing their efforts to attract international students, who enrich the campus, offset declining domestic numbers, and support our Island economy. We are in the process of developing a recruitment and retention strategy to assist our post-secondary institutions to attract international students.

Madame Speaker, red tape negatively impacts Island residents and businesses, with unnecessary regulatory requirements. To address red tape, we will be initiating sector roundtables to identify Government Regulations and processes which are barriers to success. Sector experts will identify issues to be corrected in the short-term, and we will take the necessary action to rectify them. For more complex issues, we will work with the roundtable experts to identify long-term solutions to eliminate the regulatory burden.

As well, each Government department will be tasked with identifying processes that will eliminate red tape. Staff resources will be assigned to assist departments in performing internal reviews, identifying streamlining measures, and implementing change.

***"...each Government department will be tasked with identifying processes that will eliminate red tape."***

**Communities**

Madame Speaker, since 2008 our Government's investment in the Island Community Fund has resulted in more than 100 communities receiving financial support, to carry out infrastructure projects in the areas of fire and safety, recreation, playgrounds, upgrades to community facilities, and expansion of community-based tourism infrastructure. Recognizing the value of the program and our commitment to supporting Island communities, the Island Community Fund has been extended to 2014-2015 with a budget of approximately $2.3 million. Next year will see the completion of some prominent projects such as, the Red Cross Operations Centre, Destination Village Musical in Evangeline, and a new gateway at the entrance to Souris.

***"...the Island Community Fund has been extended to 2014-2015 with a budget of approximately $2.3 million."***

**Three-Year Plan**

Madame Speaker, we are continuing to implement our Plan to achieve a balanced Budget by 2016. The elements of our Plan are to grow revenues faster then expenditures. In the next year, revenues will grow by 3.3 percent, while expenditure increases are held to 2 percent. In the 2015-2016 year, we expect revenues to grow by 3.5 percent, while expenditures will grow by 1.0 percent.

The fundamentals of this Plan are:

- departments maintain spending at current levels;
- health expenditures have moderate increases; and
- pension expenditures are put on solid footing.

I am pleased, Madame Speaker, that all of the fundamentals of our Plan continue to be achieved, and targets are being met.

***"all of the fundamentals of our Plan continue to be achieved, and targets are being met."***

In the next fiscal year, we will incur a deficit of $39.7 million with a small surplus in 2015-2016.

**Conclusion**

Madame Speaker, the global economy continues to present challenges for our jurisdiction. The slow recovery has made it difficult to grow revenues at the normal rate. This has resulted in difficult decisions to ensure we proceed to a balanced Budget.

Pension reforms were implemented, the HST was introduced, Government expenditures have been restrained, and operations were made more-efficient. These initiatives were not always popular, but were necessary to ensure the Province operates in a fiscally-responsible manner.

Through these processes, we have managed to implement modest, targeted initiatives that will make the lives of Islanders better. We have protected our investments in health care and education, and ensured all Islanders have the opportunity to succeed and thrive.

Madame Speaker, the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Charlottetown Conference promises to make 2014 a great year to be an Islander and a Canadian. It gives us the opportunity to look to our past and the remarkable contributions of Prince Edward Islanders, and at the same time, plan for a future full of more remarkable contributions.

Madame Speaker, we look forward to a wonderful year!

***" We have protected our investments in health care and education, and ensured all Islanders have the opportunity to succeed and thrive."***